

The LAY-MONK.

Tantos illa suo rumpebat Pectore quæstus. Virg.

From FRIDAY, December 11. to MONDAY, December 14. 1713.

SIR ARTHUR WIMBLETON, who abounds with Friendship and Humanity, often does me the Honour to single me out for a private Conversation. I was the other Day with this Gentleman, in his own Chamber, when I observ'd that He, who us'd to express in his Aspect a great Deal of Spirit and Alacrity, appear'd with an Air very thoughtful and dejected. I ask'd him the Reason of it, and he told me he had just then receiv'd News of the Death of a Niece of his, who was his particular Favourite, a Woman of great Vertue, Beauty and Discretion. She had been married about Twenty Years to a Gentleman of a plentiful Fortune; But his Manner of Life for the greatest Part of the Time had been so extravagant and expensive, that he had wasted his Estate, and brought his Family into a sad Prospect of Poverty and Contempt. It is now, says SIR ARTHUR, as I fear'd; He has broke the poor Woman's Heart. Here is a Letter she wrote to him about Six Months ago, when he was at a Friend's House in the Country. She sent me a Copy of it for my Approbation; and I now put it into your Hands to make it publick, for the Sake of such dissolute Heads of Families who have no Regard either to their Wives or their Posterity.

To N----- B----- Esq.

MY DEAR,

FOR the first Years after our Marriage, it is impossible to describe a State of greater Tranquility and Delight than you and I enjoy'd. I do not remember that any hasty Expression, or any cross Accident ever ruffled our Tempers, or created the least Uneasiness. I, for my Part, thought it a Heaven upon Earth. I reflected on the Felicity of my Condition with the utmost Joy and Gratitude to Providence. Where-ever I came, all Persons admir'd and extoll'd your extraordinary Qualities; and while I attended to them, I often betray'd in my Looks and Words the Pleasure I felt in hearing your repeated Praises. I was the Envy of the Women, who us'd to express the greatest Esteem of your Person and Endowments,

and with an Air that seem'd to speak something more than a bare Commendation. Such was the Sweetness and Vivacity, the Chearfulness and Equality of your Disposition, so entertaining your Conversation, and so agreeable your constant good Humour, that every Body heard you with Delight or Envy. I am sure I always listned to your Discourse with the utmost Pleasure, but never to Satiety. Add to this the Marks that you gave me of an ardent Affection, and the Satisfaction you always express'd in my Company, and it will not seem strange that I esteem'd my self the most happy of Women.

But O how soon were these joyful Days chang'd! After five Years, your own natural good Sense began to be perverted by the Conversation of loose Persons, with whom you then became acquainted, who seduc'd you from your Vertue and Innocence into a Way of Life, by which you have greatly diminish'd your Estate, and involv'd your self in Debt; and to prevent our entire Destruction, I, who have often earnestly spoke to you in vain, have determin'd to write you this Letter, as the last Way I have left of entreating you to consider what you are doing.

It is with great Satisfaction I acknowledge you still retain your pleasant Conversation and excellent Humour. I cannot complain of any Decay of Conjugal Affection on your Part, as I know there is none on mine. I wish your Happiness as I do that of my own Soul. I have shewn how much I love you, and how little I am able to bear your Disgrace, or see you uneasy, by parting first with my Jointure, then with my Jewels, and at last with my Plate. I have liv'd, even without Necessaries, that I might prevent the Consequences of your Profuseness. I have laid down my Coach, turn'd off half my Servants, and neither make nor receive Visits. I keep my self and Children bare of Clothes, and with cheap and spare Diet, and retrench all the Expences I am able. If the Children are ever so sick, I have no Fee to give the Doctor, so I nurse them as well as I can, and we take our Turns to help one another.

While

(Price Three Half-pence.)

While you grow familiar every Day with new Acquaintance, you are alienated from your own Family: Tho' you lodge at home, you spend the greatest part of your Time abroad; you seldom return till One or Two in the Morning, when you rap at the Door, and inform your Neighbours what Hours you keep; when you go to Bed you are so full of Wine, that your Rest is very unquiet, and disturb'd. I lye weeping by you, and tell the Clock many Hours, while you are fast asleep; for you snore and grone so, that I often start up, and sit in my Bed-gown to watch you; and sometimes I think your Breath is quite gone, and am forc'd to awake you, for fear you should be strangled, and dye in your Intemperance.

Consider how much you are still in Debt; the Baker, the Brewer, the Butcher, and many others, come every Day to receive their Bills, and it grieves me to the Heart, that I have nothing to give them but repeated Excuses. I went Two Days since to your Friend Mr. M--- with your eldest Daughter, to buy her a Petticoat; when I had pitch'd upon the Silk, he told me he could not part with his Goods without ready Money; that Expression struck, like a Dagger, to my Heart. I went home ashamed and over-whelm'd with Grief, and the tender-hearted Child observing it, fell into a great Passion, and wept bitterly.

Betty is a great Girl, and Jenny comes forward apace, and, if all my Neighbours do not flatter me, and the Mother has not prejudic'd me too much in their favour, they are Two as pretty, sensible, sweet temper'd Children, as can be seen in any Family. My Dear, consider these unhappy Girls, in a few Years, for want of Fortunes, must go out to Service, and earn their Bread with the Labour of their Hands. How can you, who once liv'd in Plenty and Splendor, bear the Thoughts of seeing your Daughters come home to visit you in the old lac'd Shoes and cast Mantuas of their Mistresses? Is it not more desirable to follow them to the Grave, than to see them reduc'd to such a Condition?

Jack, in half a Year will be out of his Time, and the poor Boy will have nothing to set him up; he must become a Journey-Man, or an under Writer to one of the Companies of Trade, if his Disappointment does not tempt him to seek his Fortune at Sea, or enter upon worse Courses by Land.

You say you love me, and I believe you do; you express a Fondness of your Children, and I am satisfy'd you are sincere; Why then do you cruelly abandon us to Shame and Sorrow, and all the Calamities of Want and Poverty?

Allow me, my Dear, to speak freely to you; since it is perhaps the last Time I shall trouble you on this Subject. You know I love you, and that I can have no Design to upbraid or reproach you, but only to make you sensible of the approaching Ruin of your Family, which you may possibly yet prevent. Suffer me to unburden my Soul, and to expostulate with you in the bitter Anguish of my Heart. No Body will be so faithful and so importunate, or is under such

Obligations of Duty and Interest to deal so plainly with you, as the Wife that loves you and that you love. My Bosom is so full I am ready to burst; my Tears, while I write, flow down upon the Paper. Imagine then you saw me upon my Knees, praying to you thus: "I beseech you, my Dear, I entreat, I conjure you by all our past Endearments and solemn Vows, by your Interest and Duty, by the Love of a Husband, and the tender Bowels of a Father, alter your Course of Life, and save yet your Family, that must otherwise unavoidably perish."

If you are regardless of my Comfort and Welfare, what have your Innocent Children done to offend and provoke you to give them up to Want and Misery? Should it not touch your Heart, and melt your very Soul, to consider that you have given Being to these Unhappy Creatures; Unhappy, by the Profuse Life of a good natur'd and indulgent Father? Nor is the Calamity like to stop here; for with their Kind they will perhaps propagate their Misery, and produce a Train of indigent and abject Creatures, that shall feel the sad Effects of your Faults to late Posterity. These will be told what a plentiful Estate you squander'd away, which brought them into their low Condition. Oh! my Breast swells, and my Heart will break by these Reflections! I am in an Agony of Trouble: Heaven grant I do not loose my Senses! ---If you are not mov'd by the sad Fate that is ready to fall upon your Family, have some Mercy on your self. When you have spent all, What must support and comfort you under the Infirmities of Age? A Man in Years, reduc'd from a plentiful Condition to Poverty, is a sad Spectacle; an Object of Pity to his Friends, and of Derision to his Enemies. Should it not pierce your Heart, to think that in all probability you will be brought so low, as to be glad to meet a good natur'd Acquaintance, who out of Compassion to your Wants, yet with Modesty and Tenderness, shall steal some small Gift into your Hand, to help buy you Bread? I do not despair that these Lines may leave some Impression on the Heart of one that possesses so much Goodness of Nature, and whose easy Temper has been the chief Occasion of his Errors. If you would take up and enter upon a frugal Life, while something is left for our Support, our Fortune might yet be retriev'd. Both you and I have Relations of Interest and Wealth, who declare they will stand by you, and generously offer to procure you some Place of Profit, if you would apply your Thoughts to Business, and abandon your fatal Company. I am, my Dear,

Your most affectionate
but afflicted Wife ---



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